



A Message From The Secretary

Kansas lawmakers wrapped up this session over the weekend with plans to return May 27 for Sine Die. It was a successful session for KDHE as we received new and/or enhanced funding for several initiatives including a dental health officer position, the infant-toddler program, smoking cessation efforts for pregnant women, and stream segment classification work. We now turn our focus to the next legislative session and begin planning new initiatives as

we strive to improve the state and our agency's effectiveness for Kansans. We have a busy time ahead this summer and I will highlight just a few of the issues before us on which many of you are already working.

This summer, depending on weather conditions, grassland burning practices, and public response to ozone alert days, we may see the Kansas City metro lose its attainment status for air quality. This would have negative impacts on the state. Therefore, several of our environment staff are involved in efforts to prevent this from happening and are working with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Mid America Regional Council (MARC) and the Environmental Protection Agency.

West Nile Virus (WNV) is expected to return to Kansas soon and preparations are underway to ensure Kansans are ready. Brochures, posters, public service announcements and other media efforts are being finalized to send the message that the risk of contracting this sometimes deadly disease that is carried by mosquitoes, can be reduced significantly by using insect repellent with DEET, wearing protective clothing when practical, removing standing water, using larvicide in areas where water cannot be removed, and repairing screens and other small openings in homes. These are simple, effective ways to reduce the risks of WNV.

As Kansas and the U.S. continues to see alarming rates of obesity and overweight prevalence, we must continue to find ways to promote healthy activities. One popular effort, Kansas Kid's Fitness Day, drew hundreds of children from around the state to Cedar Crest and more than 40 other locations in the state, to encourage children to spend more time involved in healthy activities such as running and jumping rope. KDHE is also studying the prevalence of overweight in children in school children during the 2004-2005 school year. The study will look at eating habits, activities children do while in and out of school, and collect height and weight data, all of which will help better determine what is effective and possible changes needed.

Hopefully, you have had a chance to meet Brian Huesers, our new Chief Information Officer (Director of Information Systems) who is quickly getting acquainted with the computer systems/capabilities at KDHE as well as meeting with staff to learn more about roles and needs. He has nearly 20 years of information technology experience and we are pleased to have him on board.

Although we have a lot of work before us with these and other issues, so much has already been accomplished and I do thank all of you for your hard work. As a way of showing appreciation for your many contributions to KDHE, management will again host an employee picnic in July at the Clyde O'Bracken Park to provide a time for fun, relaxation, and recognition for a job well done. We'll have more details in the coming weeks. Have a safe Memorial Day Holiday!

Be Well,